RESTORATION REVIEW

We call it death to leave this world, but were we once out of it, and enstated into the happiness of the next, we should think it were dying to come back to it again. — *Thomas Sherlock*

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The Doe of the Dawn: A Christian World View …

LIFE BEGINS AT DEATH

While most of us would probably opt for a long life on this earth, assuming reasonably good health, maybe even a 100 years, none of us would choose to be here forever. Even though we all know our years are limited, and we would have it no other way, life being what it is, we nonetheless give little thought to the inevitable, *death.* While it would be morbid to be preoccupied with thoughts of death, it may also indicate an imbalance in our humanness if we give little or no thought to it. If life is seen in terms of God's purpose for us, we can only conclude that He is the author of death as well as of birth. When we come to realize that God cannot do with us all that He intends unless we die, we can then put death in proper perspective.

While the best of human thought through the ages has extolled long life as a blessing from God, the believer can conclude that death at any age is better than life as we know it in this world. We all want to live to a ripe old age, which is both natural and appropriate, but those who die while yet young are still better off, unless indeed life in this world is the only life there is. That a high percentage of people in the so-called "Christian world" either do not believe in life after death or have no opinion about it points to the hopelessness of our modern age.

My thesis herein is a daring one for our incredulous world: *life really begins at death.* We do of course have life in this world, but it only anticipates the glorious life that comes with death. This life is but preparatory and prefatory; the life to come is the main event. While life here is to be an exciting and meaningful adventure, it cannot compare to what is yet to be revealed. So, I am affirming as a believer that instead of death marking the end of life it is really the beginning of life. I also believe that apart from this view of death there is no way to make sense of this world. If there is life beyond death in which the tragedies and injustices of this world are set right, then we have an answer for our kind of world. If this world is all there is and death marks the end of reality, then Shakespeare was right in describing life as "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

The most impelling Scripture on life beyond death is what Jesus said to the thief on the cross: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). The certainty with which Jesus spoke is impressive. When the brigand sued for mercy, asking Jesus to remember him when he came in his kingdom, Jesus did not speak obliquely or pass him off with "I'll

see what I can do for you." *Today,* he told the penitent man, *you will be with me in paradise.* Men mean business in their hour of death. While the thief at first joined the other one in reviling Jesus, according to both Matthew and Mark, he at last recognized the one he mocked as his Savior. He received assurance that on that very day, the day of his agonizing death, he would be in the paradise of God. Life really began for the thief on the day of his death.

When that Scripture is coupled with Lk. 23:46, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," we have overpowering evidence for life beyond death. Jesus was fully confident that life would continue in the presence of God and that the penitent thief would be with him. From cruel crosses on Calvary's brow they moved on into the paradise of God, and *on the same day.* If we consider Jesus a reliable witness, we have all the evidence we need that life really begins at death.

Since our Lord came into this world from the paradise of God, we can accept with vigorous assurance his testimony about *returning* to the paradise of God. And what marvelous assurance there is in these words: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn. 14:2-3). This informative passage not only assures us that there is life beyond death, but it makes death a great adventure. Death becomes non-death if death is made to mean the end of life. It is rather the *beginning* of life, for it is the occasion of our being ushered into the Father's house, which here means heaven. This makes death a milestone, a welcome one, in our continuing fellowship with God. When death is seen as something like walking from one room into another, it ceases to be something dreadful. If we believe the promises of Scripture, death should be attractive to us. We may dread the ordeal of dying and the suffering that sometimes attends it, but death itself should be precious to the believer.

Besides the testimony of Jesus, the Scriptures abound with evidence that life begins at death. The apostle Peter writes positively of "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). The apostle Paul writes with the same certainty: "We know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1). And it is clear that he had no idea of waiting in a grave for this to happen, for he said: "I have the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better" (Phil 1:23). He is equally emphatic in 2 Cor. 5:8 where he refers to being "present with the Lord" when he is "absent from the body."

There is in the scheme of things a resurrection and a judgment, but these do not preclude the believer going immediately into the paradise of God at death, for judgment does not determine one's destiny.

That life *really* begins at death is even more exciting if we are to have new bodies, spiritual bodies that have some similarity to the bodies we now have, and this seems to be the verdict of Scripture. While it is a subject shrouded in mystery, we have some hints as to the nature of "a house not made with hands," as Paul refers to our future embodiment. That passage, 2 Cor. 5, strongly suggests that the soul of the believer is never without a body, for the apostle says, when referring to putting on the heavenly clothing, "so that we will not be found naked" (verse 3). Paul sees the soul of man as always embodied: when our earthly body is dissolved we put on (immediately?) our heavenly body (2 Cor. 5:1). If Paul cannot see himself (the soul or spirit) "found naked" (without a body), we can only conclude that the apostle expected to receive an ethereal body immediately upon death.

Since 1 Cor. 15 describes a resurrection in which the believer will receive a spiritual, glorious body, we can conclude that the body received immediately at death is a temporary one or one that will be more gloriously manifested at the resurrection. At this point we must be careful and not be too literal, to the degree of crassness, in our view of the resurrection. There must be *symbolic* truth involved when the Bible speaks of graves opening and the dead coming forth, for most graves have long since disappeared and the bodies have turned to dirt that has shifted and washed into rivers and seas and even turned into other elements.

We can hardly think like the Scottish preacher that was dedicating a new cemetery. "How wonderful it will be on resurrection morning for those buried here," he said, "for their first view will be this lovely scenery." No one who interprets the Bible with even modest responsibility believes anything like that. His first mistake was to suppose that the dead are in their graves. His second mistake was to turn the promise of a resurrection into gross literalness. To me the resurrection means that we will live again and we will have spiritual bodies.

The believer as a "joint heir" with Christ is promised that he will have an ethereal (spiritual) body such as Christ had at his resurrection. The aged apostle John, in the face of these mysteries, wrote: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2). *We shall be like him!* Another apostle gives a hint of

what Christ is now like in heaven: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

Christ now has a body, a glorious body, in heaven, and our worn-out earthly bodies will one day be like his heavenly body. It is a breathtaking promise for those who really believe.

The scanty evidence we have suggests that Jesus’ resurrected body was a *new* body and not a resuscitated old body, even though the new resembled (or *could* resemble at his will) the old, for his disciples recognized him, ate with him, and saw the marks of crucifixion. He could appear and disappear, walk through closed doors, and transport himself as fast as the mind can think, none of which he did in his old body. After his resurrection he seemed to be in a different dimension. I would guess, based on John 20:6, where the cocoon-like grave wrappings are described as folded or collapsed, that Jesus’ body simply disintegrated or disappeared, ceasing to exist, which is what will happen to ours. He then appeared, again and again, in a new resurrected (different in kind) body, which had a cosmic character in that it moved in and out of this world. It was in this body that he ascended, but not in a spatial sense, as if actually moving through space, except to accommodate the senses of his disciples, for such would be unnecessary. Jesus could go from earth to heaven and back again (Is there really space involved?) as fast as he could think.

It is remarkable that when Jesus was in the tomb there was no one on earth that believed he would rise, not even his own apostles. But when Peter and John entered the tomb that Easter morning and “saw,” as Jn. 20:8 puts it, they believed. What they saw was what Jesus left behind, the collapsed wrappings (into which 100 pounds of spices had been sprinkled) that revealed that no *man* had disturbed the corpse. They saw the empty cocoon that once contained the body, now gone, and they now believed he was risen, though John tells us that they still did not understand the Scriptures that spoke of the resurrection.

Our Lord’s appearances during the next forty days (Did he not move between heaven and earth during this time?) should answer the oft-asked question of whether we will recognize one another in the next life. The answer has to be an emphatic *yes,* otherwise heaven would be a gathering of lonely strangers. Jesus had gone to paradise the day of his death, but he nonetheless appeared to his followers upwards of a dozen times that we know of, and they always recognized him, though he sometimes withheld his identity for a

time, as in Lk. 24:16. This tells us that Jesus' heavenly body had likenesses to his old body. While this is a mystery beyond our comprehension, we can believe that our bodies will be like his and we too will be recognizable to those who knew us on earth.

Since we will know even as we are known (1 Cor. 13:12), we can conclude that all those in heaven will know one another. If Peter and John recognized Moses and Elijah, whom they never knew on earth, in a supernatural experience on earth (Lk. 9:33), will we not know them in heaven?

Surely death does not mark the end of our spiritual growth, so we go on learning, serving, growing in heaven in *new* bodies, in ways that we now have no way of comprehending, but I would guess that our vineyard will include innumerable universes. God has not created the vast expanses of the heavens for no reason. We will continue to live and to grow, to advance in our fellowship with our Creator. This principle surely applies to all God's handiwork: *where there* is *life there* is *growth.* I sometimes comfort a mother who has lost a little one with: *Oh, yes, indeed, you will see him again in heaven, but he will be grown by then!* Of course, soul growth continues after death, for there is no such thing as a static soul. We can presume that the infants who die (and the millions of aborted ones?) are met on "the other side" and cared for in a special way as their Father's purposes are fulfilled for each one, soul growth.

While I am not a reincarnationist, I would not rule it out as a possibility for some souls who have had no chance in this world. I am not sure there is anything in Scripture that necessarily rules out are-embodiment of a soul in this world. It has been extensively believed throughout history

and was apparently believed by Jesus' disciples, otherwise they would not have supposed that a man was *born* blind because of his sins, obviously committed in a previous life (Jn. 9:2). Jesus did not rebuke them for such a conclusion; in fact he responded with "It was neither that this man sinned (in a previous life) nor his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." Nor did Jesus scoff at the idea that some saw him as a reincarnated Old Testament prophet, as reported by his apostles (Mt. 16:14).

Reincarnation helps to answer such hard questions as, if it is important that a soul be prepared for heaven by a life here on earth (which is apparently God's intention), why do so many in this world have no chance at all? Some may return for another chance. And I will warn you, if you have not looked into arguments for reincarnation, that the evidence

for it is impressive. While I respect any viewpoint that has been believed by so many for so long, including both the great philosophers and the great religions, on reincarnation I remain an inquiring skeptic.

I am also sympathetic with a particular kind of universalism that sees all souls as *eventually* claimed by God for all eternity. I am disturbed by any conclusion that makes God the loser in the struggle for souls, with Satan getting the vast majority and God so few. Nor can I conceive of God and the redeemed ones as gloriously happy in heaven when all others, the multiplied billions, are damned forever in a devil's hell. Would not the love of God be defeated and His purposes thwarted? Neither do I draw, comfort from an annihilation theory: that the unredeemed are destroyed. Universalism does not rule out a hell that burns away the dross, metes out retribution for evils done in the flesh, and corrects the inequities that only another world can accomplish and which the justice of God demands.

Such theologians as C. H. Dodd point to the Scriptures themselves as teaching the eventual redemption of all mankind, such as Rom. 5:18: "So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." Some of the early fathers insisted that Col. 1:20 shows that the "all things in heaven and earth" that will finally be reconciled to God includes even the devil and his angels, following their purification in "the lake of fire."

While it must be granted that universalism is speculation and should be held only as a studied opinion, some responsible scholars, such as the late William Barclay, are on record as confirmed universalists. One persuasive point they make is that no choice of man is ever final, for God, who is eager to show mercy, will not allow it to be final. And "the Hound of Heaven" to whom a thousand years is but as one day has plenty of time to pursue sinful man, even through the labyrinths of eternity!

While there is uncertainty about some of these things, we can be sure that life really begins when we die. This being the case we can see more clearly what life in this world is all about: *we are to be preparing ourselves for the main event!* If the values of the world to come are centered in fellowship with God, then our concerns in this world should be to train our souls, develop character, and increase our capacity for life with God. —*the Editor*

Since so many who receive this journal are greatly encouraged by what they read, we are persuaded that many more would be pleased to receive it. Will you help us reach out to more folk. If you get up a club of four or more names, the price is only 3.00 per name per year. Many of our most appreciative readers did not even know we existed until someone set them a free subscription. I fyou know of people who might like the paper, send us their names whether you have the money or not.

Since this has been a sad year for Ouida and me, having lost our 3-year old granddaughter, some of our gracious readers are concerned that we might not be happy. We are gloriously happy, for by God's grace we lay claim to that eternal city where there will be no more darkness, no more sadness, and where all tears are wiped away. We have inexpressible joy because we believe the promoises. We thank you for loving us.

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The New Mormon Temple in Dallas …

INSIDE A TEMPLE BUILT BY MAN

Before I drove into Dallas to see the new $7 million Mormon temple I typed out this verse from the Bible on a small piece of paper, using the King James version:

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." (Acts 17:24)

It was to be a love note to him or her who guided me through the temple. It so happened that I had no guide, so I at last handed the note to one of the Mormons with whom I conversed, asking him what the apostle's declaration meant to him. He studied it for a moment and then complained that he could not respond to a passage taken out of context like that. So I briefly reviewed the context for him: Paul was speaking on Mars Hill in Athens to unbelievers, to people who knew nothing of the true God of heaven except as "an unknown god." The apostle tells them of this unknown God, and among the things he said was that God was creator of the universe, Lord of heaven and earth, and that he did not dwell in temples that men build.

The dear man was lost for words, but finally said “We do not believe that God dwells in this temple.” That contradicted all they told us that day about the temple, and even their literature describes the Dallas temple as the “House of the Lord.” It is deemed “so sacred” that only within its walls can certain “sacred ceremonies and ordinances” be performed.

But I conceded to the good man that not only the Mormons but many churches, including my own, tend to box the God of heaven into edifices and sanctuaries of various sorts. I noted that the Scriptures teach that it is the heart of a believer that is God’s sanctuary and that it is the church itself, the people, that is His temple, quoting 1 Cor. 3:16: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” I told him that there were no holy places or sacred things the world over, except the human heart in which the God of heaven dwells. And why must “sacred ordinances” be restricted to brick and mortar - or *marble* in the case of the Dallas temple? If vicarious baptisms (baptisms for the dead) are truly an ordinance of God, why can’t they be performed in Lake Dallas as well as the Dallas temple?

One young elder pursued me out on the grounds as I was admiring the elegant edifice from without, his entree being that he thought he had met me somewhere. I have never visited with a more delightful young man, and he remained that way amidst a very frank discussion. He seemed to understand why Christians generally see Mormons as a sect and a cult, for they make it their aim to convert other Christians to their system, however devoted to Christ they may already be. But he insisted that they accept other believers as Christians, and even dared to hope, when I asked him, that someday they would invite the likes of a Presbyterian minister into their pulpits. I might have told him that I hoped the same for my own Churches of Christ! He had already told me of “many wonderful Christians” that he knew in the Church of Christ.

At last I told him that his testimonial that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God was unimportant to me, for what do his revelations really add, in terms of vital truths, to what we already have in the Scriptures? “But when you confess,” I went on to say, “that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, I buy that.” He emphasized his commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord of his life, and this with warmth and sincerity. At that point I assured him that as baptized believers we were brothers in Christ in spite of differences. We spent sometime discussing how wrong one might be and still be a Christian (since we both believed the other to be wrong about some important things), and I conceded that I did not know the answer to that, that only God could make such a judgment.

Many evangelicals insist that Mormons are not Christians, but it is a fallacy to judge every Mormon by everything credited to Mormonism. Moreover, is Mormonism, as erroneous as it may be, *fatal* to being a Christian? I asked that of the Church of Christ minister who probably knows the Mormons better than any of us, Harry Robert Fox, longtime missionary to Japan, who is the only non-Mormon I know who has taught in a Mormon pulpit. He even had audience with one of the apostles in Salt Lake City— but the very moment he questioned the apostle's interpretation of a Scripture (that "the camp of the saints" in Rev. 20:9 refers to the Latter Day Saints!) the conversation ended!

I was impressed that Harry Robert sees the Mormons as the most devoted Christians he knows, though he doubts that they really understand the grace of God, which is probably true of many Christians.

The Dallas temple is the thirtieth of its kind, and in a few more years there will be fifty of them scattered all over the world. They are building more of them, smaller than the older ones, so that a temple will be accessible to Mormons everywhere. If the angel Moroni, reigning on a not-so-high steeple, were replaced by a cross the Dallas temple might be taken for a not-so-large Catholic or Methodist church. It is nestled in a quiet neighborhood in opulent North Dallas.

The neighbors didn't like it and protested, pointing to possible congestion, but in Texas at least one can build a church anywhere, including the Mormons. Now that it is completed I suspect the neighbors are not so disturbed since the intrusion is no more than any other church edifice and the appearance is at least as elegant. Nor is there all that much traffic since a Mormon temple is designed only for small gatherings, the largest room in the Dallas complex accommodating about sixty. Unlike other churches, there is no "sanctuary" in the Mormon temple! It is even closed on Sundays.

I have seen other Mormon temples but only from without, for they may be entered only by the faithful saints, which is the case with the Dallas temple now that it has been dedicated. I entered at the reception desk where a Mormon now presents his credentials. There are dressing rooms where they put on white gowns for the various rituals. There are "Ordinance" rooms where various vows and commitments are made, "Sealing" rooms where couples (and even entire families) are sealed for "time and all eternity," and a "Celestial" room that is symbolic of one's highest potential. There is also a baptistry mounted on the backs of twelve brazen oxen, representing the twelve tribes, where

vicarious baptisms (for the dead) are performed, as well as several instructional rooms. One can see that a number of things can be going on at the same time, with comparatively few people involved.

Alongside the baptistry there was a sign quoting 1 Cor. 14:29, presumably for the visiting non-Mormons, which read: “Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” This is not only their proof text for vicarious baptisms but also the basis of their extensive genealogical research. The evidence for vicarious baptism in the primitive church, however slight, indicates that the ceremony was for departed ones who died while under instruction. There must have been such a custom in the Corinthian church of a member being immersed in behalf of a disciple who died before he was baptized. This suggests a superstitious view of baptism, that one cannot possibly go to heaven without it. However that is, Paul neither approves nor disapproves of the custom, but merely uses it to argue for the resurrection. There is neither a command for nor an example of vicarious baptism anywhere in the Scriptures.

It could hardly be expected that there would be such a Scripture posted in the Celestial room, where couples are married for eternity, as Lk. 20:35: “They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage … for they are equal unto the angels.” The Mormon response to this unobscure passage is interesting. True, they say, there are no marriages in heaven, so it has to be done before you get there! But the plain truth that Jesus was teaching, when asked about the woman who had seven husbands in this world, was that in heaven the woman would be married to *none* of the men since people will not be married in heaven but will be like the angels.

The use the Mormons make of these two passages, one obscure and the other quite clear, illustrates how men are inclined to take what they want from the Bible and reject what they don’t want. And aren’t we all guilty of this kind of unfaithfulness to the Scriptures? We allow our sinful pride (what *we* want more than what God wants!) and our sectarian systems to dictate the way we treat the Holy Scriptures.

But I would not argue these doctrines with the Mormons since they are not the heart of Mormonism and may not be harmful. A couple that is sealed for all time and eternity may be less likely to divorce, and I can’t see that it hurts anything to be baptized for the likes of Mark Twain (or Samuel Langhorne Clemens— let’s get the genealogy right!), infidel rascal that he was. But I have no evidence from Scripture that it will do any good.

The heart of Mormonism is their extra "Bibles," and it is here that the religion stands or falls. In several of the rooms in the Dallas temple there was displayed the Bible and the four Mormon scriptures, bound together in one volume that matched the Bible. The two books rested on the table one on top of the other as if equal, which is what they believe, but which would offend most Christians.

If the Mormons had only the Book of Mormon as an additional "Bible," their differences with other Christians would not be great, for most of their major doctrines— vicarious baptism, celestial marriage, the word of wisdom, the doctrine of priesthoods, organization of the church, the plurality of Gods, God as an exalted man, man's ability to become a God, the three degrees of heaven— are not even mentioned in the Book of Mormon. While this revelation was to be final, according to the first editions of the Book of Mormon, the prophet Joseph Smith found it necessary to change the earlier revelation in order to lay a foundation for still more "Bibles." Finally came the Book of Commandments, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price.

This substantial change in the Book of Mormon is but one of 3,913 that have been made through the years, most of them being minor (grammar or spelling). But these changes, even if minor, cast doubt upon the book being "the Word of God" as claimed. According to early Mormon witnesses, Joseph Smith dictated the contents of the book to his assistants word for word as he looked into his hat (where the words appeared in Egyptian-like characters *with* the English translation), which have caused some to jest that Joseph Smith is the only man to start a new church by talking into his hat!

So the prophet did not *translate,* which might in time call for corrections, as in the case of Bible translations, but he *dictated* what he saw in his hat, word for word, and his secretaries would read the words back to him to make sure they were right, and only when it was absolutely right would the words in the hat disappear, making place for the next. This is why, when the prophet wrote the history of his church, he described the Book of Mormon as "the most accurate book in the world."

Why then do they keep changing it, even spelling and grammar? Cannot God spell? Does He not know good English? And why since He was translating ancient plates did He use the language of the King James version of the Bible? Even more serious is that several changes have been made to support more recent Mormon doctrines, such as passages

identifying Jesus as "the Eternal Father" changed to make him "the Son of the Eternal Father," so as not to contradict the present doctrine of plurality of Gods. These changes are clearly evident in earlier and later editions of the Book of Mormon.

Equally challenging to the Book of Mormon is that while it describes a civilization in the United States long before Christ, including thirty-odd cities, shipbuilding, temples, synagogues, and even horses (which according to history came with the Spaniards), along with wars that killed hundreds of thousands, none of this has any support from either history or archaeology. The Book of Mormon goes so far as to say that in ancient America "the whole face of the land had become covered with buildings," and there were silver and gold coins stamped by the old Hebrew tribes that migrated here, and they even built a temple similar to Solomon's! But how much of this has the archaeologist's spade confirmed? Not a single item! One archaeologist, Michael Coe, who describes himself as "a sympathetic and interested outsider" wrote as follows: "The bare facts of the matter are that nothing, absolutely nothing, has ever shown up in any New World excavation which would suggest to a dispassionate observer that the Book of Mormon, as claimed by Joseph Smith, is a historical document relating to the history of early migrants to our hemisphere." *(The Mormon Papers*, p. 50)

The Bible, on the other hand, is confirmed throughout by archaeological research. The remains of Old Testament cities such as Ai, Megiddo, Jericho, and Gibeah have long since been uncovered and identified, and ancient empires like the Babylonians and the Hittites have been resurrected by the spade. 2 Kings 20:20 says Hezekiah built a conduit to bring water into the besieged city of Jerusalem, a tunnel cut through rock. The archaeologists found it and I myself have walked through it, just as I stood upon "the Pavement" where Jesus stood before Pilate, far below the present city of Jerusalem, turned up by archaeology. Many New Testament cities are now identified— Nazareth, Bethlehem, Nain, Bethsaida, Caesarea Philippi. Even the pool of Bethesda (Jn. 5:2) is identified. Biblical archaeology is voluminous and overwhelming.

Why would God provide abundant confirmation to the Bible through modern scientific research but no confirmation at all to the Book of Mormon, if it, too, is His revealed word? One Mormon, though now an ex-Mormon, answers that question by insisting that the Book of Mormon was authored by neither God nor angels, but was the work of Joseph Smith the prophet, and that it cannot be confirmed by archaeology since it is "an American frontier novel," to use her term. Fawn Brodie, a Jeffersonian scholar, has written what is conceded to be the best biography of Joseph Smith (and a sympathetic one), entitled *No*

Man Knows My History. A born Mormon, she was resolved to remain one, concluding that such things as the Book of Mormon could be viewed as useful myth, but she was nonetheless excommunicated.

If I have serious objections to Mormonism, I nonetheless admire and appreciate the Mormons themselves. As a people they have risen far above the vagaries of their early history, their founding fathers being less than morally exemplary. They are, like others of us, a changing church. How far they will move away from cultism toward midstream Christianity remains to be seen. In the meantime they make friendly neighbors, good citizens, patriotic Americans. Should most Americans become Mormons we could probably do away with all welfare programs, for they do a good job caring for their own, and they have vigorous interest in the solidarity of the home. They work hard, pay their debts, and vote for Ronald Reagan. They are beauty queens on the one hand, and pro quarterbacks (six, I understand!) on the other. —*the Editor*

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THE MARK OF CAIN

While the Scriptures do not tell us much about Cain, what they do reveal is excitingly interesting. We cannot be sure whether our first parents would have brought children into this world had they not sinned and had remained in the Garden of Eden, or whether having children was related to their fallen nature. Those of us with children and grandchildren can appreciate an interpretation that would make such an experience a punishment from God!

Anyway Cain was the first child to be born into this world, and it says much about human nature that he was destined to be guilty of fratricide in that he killed his own brother. The first man born became the first murderer, which is about where we are in this world! When we add the sobering truth that whoever hates his brother is a murderer (l Jn. 3:15), we have to concede that ours is a fratricidal world.

The early chapters of Genesis are drenched with sin, and they reveal that man’s sin was progressive, with Gen. 4:7 indicating that sin, like an evil beast, crouched at man’s very doorstep. God warns man that sin sought to dominate him and that he must withstand its power. Even though this admonition was directed to Cain when he reacted with arrogance and self-will when God rejected his sacrifice while accepting his brother’s, Cain could not or would not handle temptation.

If the heavy hand of sin in those early years of history is impressive, the outpouring of God's grace should impress us even more. This is where the mark of Cain enters. While it is common to view the mark, whatever it was, as an expression of God's indignation, the record indicates that it was an act of grace. That is our subject in this article, *grace,* God's wonderful grace as indicated in the mark of Cain, along with that grace whereby God has always "marked" his covenant people.

Look at Cain. When Jude (verse 11) reaches deep into history to describe the human predicament, he writes: "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain." And 1 Jn. 3:12 names him as being of the evil one in that he murdered his brother. "And wherefore slew he him? Because his own deeds were evil, and his brother's righteous."

The Genesis account reveals Cain to be sullen, arrogant, haughty, and self-willed. Being a farmer, he brought the fruit of the ground as an offering to God, but it was not "by faith" as was Abel's, according to Heb. 11:4. Cain's heart was not right. While Abel had witness born to him that he was righteous (by his sacrifice of a lamb being ignited by God?), the sacrifice of Cain was rejected. This angered proud Cain and he was sullen and resentful, so much so that God confronted him about his attitude, warning him about the destructive nature of sin.

Now Cain lures his brother: "Let's go out into the field." In his humility Abel was not suspicious of his brother's treachery. Many a man has tricked his own brother, feigning good intentions. Even in the church many unsuspecting brethren, who dare to be different, have been lured into meetings that were really kangaroo courts. Sir Walter Scott named it when he wrote: "O, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive." A lot of deception goes on in the church, and it does indeed weave a tangled web. Even preachers have been known to do each other in. And then they have to cover their tracks, deceit begetting deceit. They walk in the way of Cain. Brave men use a knife or a club to kill, while cowards use innuendo and slander. Cain hated and killed the body, while his followers hate and kill the spirit.

Tradition has it that once Cain had murdered his brother, he did not know how to dispose of his body since funerals were not yet in vogue. Seeing a bird bury one of its own kind, he proceeded to inter Abel's body. It is a matter of record that God brings Cain to account: "Where is Abel your brother?," God asked, according to Gen. 4:9.

Cain's answer was arrogant as well as a lie: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Too much has been made of Cain's response, as if to suggest that he *should* have been his brother's keeper. There is no indication that God expected Cain to be his brother's keeper, but He did expect him to be his brother's brother. We already have too many around, besides those who run zoos, who want to be somebody's keeper, some of whom are Washington bureaucrats. I think I know more about how to run my life, including whether or not I wear a seatbelt (which I do!), than some politician in Washington. I do not want anybody, including my dear sisters and brothers in Christ, serving as my keeper. This is why I think preachers should teach and preach the word and not bother with such matters as whether the women should wear pantsuits. This is one way in which we can all be like Cain. We are not called to be keepers. We are called to be brothers and sisters, and to treat each other that way.

God now brings Cain to judgment: "What have you done'? The voice of your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground." He thus became the first man to be cursed by his Maker: "You are now cursed from the earth, which has opened her mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand." God goes on to strip Cain of his occupation; he could never again till the soil with success. He was sentenced to be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. He was judged not because he failed to be his brother's keeper but because he had murdered his brother.

At this point the floodgate of God's mercy opens up, as it always does, even in the face of intolerable sin. Cain complains that "My punishment is greater than I can bear," for he realizes that once he is a wanderer upon the earth, outside God's protective care, that he will be killed. If God responded to that as an exacting judge, He would have told Cain that death at another's hand would be his just end. He rather responds as the gracious and merciful God that He is. So that Cain would not be killed God set a mark upon him.

The nature of the mark has set off a lot of speculation. One view is that Cain had a white tongue, another that a horn protruded from his forehead, another was that he was the first black man. These imply that the mark was an evil omen, expressive of God's anger. It was rather a mark of grace, indicating that God was still protecting him.

That is the lesson. As vile and vicious as Cain was, still God's grace reached out to him. Will it not also reach out to us, however bad we may be? God will mark any of us with His protective love if we will allow Him to do so.

We cannot be sure how farreaching grace was in the case of Cain. He lived on in the land of Nod for a time, but he eventually (he and his descendants) built a great city, invented musical instruments, founded brass and iron works. Through Cain man moved from a wandering pastoral life toward modern civilization. If grace is unpredictable, it is also unpredictable what change may come in the life of one touched by grace. In the end Cain may have been one of God's heroes.

We who are followers of the humble Nazarene have "the mark of Cain" as it were in that there is an unmistakable mark that sets us apart as his disciples. This is the love of Christ, the highest expression of God's grace. Jesus identifies "love one another even as I have loved you" as the one sign that will make it evident to all men that we are truly his disciples. "By this love will all men know that you are my disciples," he assures us in Jn. 13:35.

Love is thus the badge of the Christian, the sure sign of discipleship. And love is the fruit of the Spirit, which is the mark behind the mark of the true disciple. We love only because the Spirit bears the fruit of love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). The Spirit is the seal that gives evidence that God has anointed us, according to 2 Cor. 1:21-22. The Jerusalem Bible gives an exciting translation of those verses: "Remember it is God himself who assures us all, and you, of our standing in Christ, and has anointed us, marking us with his seal and giving us the pledge, the Spirit, that we carry in our hearts."

Like Cain we are marked by God's grace, even more abundantly, for it is the Holy Spirit that lives with us and in us and bears the fruit of love. And this grace is for all, including those who have walked in the old way of Cain, destroying brotherhood in one way or another. God's gracious markings bear evidence that man can change and be changed. —*the Editor*

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The Amsterdam Meeting. . . (4)

WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED

W Carl Ketcherside

I have been repeatedly asked, since returning from Amsterdam, what such a meeting could possibly accomplish. I sympathize with those who ask the question. Inevitably it comes from those who were not present. Often it is asked with a partisan axe to grind. I think we must face the fact that, like the generation contemporary with Jesus, many of us

are blind and cannot see afar off. Long life and continuous drudgery in one of the more legalistic sects of this day, has blurred our vision and dimmed our sight until “we see men like trees walking.” We need “the second touch.” Surgery for the spiritual cataracts which cause a milky film across our minds would help. Because of my past orientation I also went with no little skepticism. It was all blown away after my arrival.

This was the first meeting of its kind in the history of the Way. Never before has there been a universal call for all evangelists to gather and pool their thinking about means and methods for the good of all. Various sects have had a state-wide and even nation-wide gatherings. But these were limited in scope. They were attended primarily by professionals who make their living by offering their skills to the highest bidder. At Amsterdam, a goodly percentage made their living from a trade, and proclaimed the Good News when and where they could in groves, along the roadsides, or on village streets. Many who attended from Third World countries were invited to visit the Samaritan’s Purse, where they were given an extra pair of trousers and a coat to provide a change from the one they wore to the conference.

The meeting also sustained a priority in that it was the first universal gathering centered solely around the *person* of Jesus Christ. And it was a mind-blowing experience. I have attended a number of lectureships, and have even participated in a few. But all of them betrayed their bias by the subjects discussed. There were speeches on Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Assembly of God theology. In many cases the talks narrowed down to restoration movement practices, and men held forth valiantly, with sweat streaming down their faces, on instrumental music, societies, Bible classes, or varied versions of the Bible, and what was wrong with all of them. At Amsterdam it was Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Secondary matters were placed on the shelf or left in the closet. The millennium, the rapture, the tribulation, and all the rest of the speculative basket of turkey eggs which television preachers toss back and forth at one another was not mentioned. One or two speakers predicted that the clock was running down and that we were in “the end times” but most everyone present was so interested in how to present the message to this generation, it did not particularly matter to them where we were on God’s time yardstick.

The conference was held in the midst of one of the most immoral and secularistic populations on the face of the earth. It fairly shown by contrast. Churches were engaged in a struggle for survival. Many had long since been sold or torn down. The war has left an aftermath of horrific departure from the power of the gospel. The Nazi occupation with its cruelty and blood thirstiness had done its damage. The baser instincts of many surfaced

with all the scum on them. In a metropolis where sex was openly flouted in a hundred evil ways, where it was open and overt young people grew up unable to determine right from wrong. They grew up like fish in a polluted pool gasping for air.

But for ten days, like a refreshing breeze sent from heaven, the representatives at the convention brought a different lifestyle to the city. People saw, touched and heard delegates from 134 countries of the globe, courteous, polite, deferential, and they hardly knew what to make of it. I was walking toward the convention center one evening, just as the sun was setting. Two Arab men saw my identification badge. I greeted them warmly and they were emboldened to ask what the convention was all about. Deciding that it was more valuable to talk with them than to go listen to someone talk to me, I detoured, and sat down beside them. I told them the meetings were not about a *what* but about a *who.* It appeared incredible to them that one would come as far as had I on such a mission. I told them that Jesus had come a lot farther to visit and to rescue men, and that he was the only remedy for our ripped-off world.

Waxing bolder, I suggested there would never be permanent peace in the Near East until it realized that “In Christ there is no East or West” and drew near to Him. I learned that both of them were graduates of universities in Europe. When the time came to part we shook hands warmly. An hour had gone by. I have often wondered what became of them. I could easily have passed them by as did hundreds of others. They were like “ships that pass in the night.” It was a real pleasure to realize that we had been dropped like parachutists in the midst of a profligate city. We were to take what prisoners we could. We were there to batter down the strongholds. We were commandos for Christ.

I overheard several people talking about how hard and insensitive the populace was. They were supposed to be skeptical and cold. I must confess that I never encountered one bit of it. I talked to them on the streets, in the trams, in the stores and restaurants. I found nothing but friendliness and a desire to help. When I turned “my half of watermelon” smile on them, inevitably they smiled back, our difference in cultures melted away and we found a common ground on which to stand. This was true of boys and girls of high school age as well as older burghers. It was great to be among them. I loved every minute of it. They were modern pagans but they were friendly pagans.

The history of the Netherlands goes way back when contrasted with our own new world existence. Amsterdam was founded about 1225, and was 550 years old when the American Revolution began. Canals divide it into 100 small islands, interlaced by more than 350 bridges. The age of some of them is staggering as seen from a canal boat while

going beneath them. Almost the entire city is built upon a foundation of piles driven fifty feet into a stratum of clay. It is a unique and quaint city. Once it was a tremendous force to be reckoned with in conjunction with the spread of protestantism and the resistance to Roman aggression. The saga of the times of William the Silent is one to be proud of.

The Thirty Years War which was a religious struggle of frightening proportions, settled eventually by the Peace of Westphalia, virtually decimated the land. But it recovered and was the one-time headquarters for the Anabaptist Movement. It seems incredible that the one-time influential area in the realm of moral and spiritual worth could have departed so far from its original purposes. Perhaps the fact that the country played host to so many evangelists from throughout the world will cause it to do a twentieth-century right-about-face and resume a position of leadership in the world of faith.

None of us can doubt that the world of our day is crying out for leadership in the kingdom of heaven. America cannot provide it. Possessed of skills in science and technology she has diverted them to selfish interests. She is a leader in space conquest and in big business. She leads on the ground and in the skies but hardly in the heavenly trek. Those who are foremost in the field of communication have generally sought to advance their own interests and to become wealthy at the expense of others. So-called “television evangelists” often fleece the flock. When one gets to the place he can no longer help he is dropped like a hot potato.

The Spirit can no longer penetrate the veneer which has been applied in the name of worship. In the reformation which stands at the door waiting for someone to let it come in, only those can be leaders who crucify self. It is in taking up the cross that one proves his worthiness. God’s will must be done and that nation which does it will be exalted. May the day hasten and come!

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BOOK NOTES

In his *Evangelism Now and Then* Michael Green, a very readable author, argues that what happened in the early church can happen now. But for this to happen we must discover their secret, which he unfolds. 4.10 postpaid.

Merrill Tenney's *Interpreting Revelation* is a book that can be read again and again, for there is always more to learn. It is not a verse by verse commentary but a general view of what the book is all about. While he is himself a premillennialist, he is both fair and informative as to other positions. He has a way of dealing with complex problems in a simple and understandable way. 9.95 postpaid.

If you are interested in last things, you should study Robert Shank's *Until: The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom*, which is a study of prophecy in both Testaments and highly informative. 10.95 postpaid.

K. C. Moser was a pioneer among Churches of Christ in preaching the gospel of the grace of God, and it is proper that his books in this area are kept in print. They are *The Gist of Romans* and *The Way of Salvation* and they are 5.95 each postpaid.

I will guarantee that you will know more about how to pray if you study Herbert Lockyer's *The Power of Prayer.* The chapters on problems in prayer, such as unanswered prayer, and Christ in prayer are especially important. 4.50 postpaid.

If you prefer the King James Version but object to its archaic verbage and mistranslations, we recommend *The New King James Version*, which is the old KJV with punctuation, unfamiliar words, archaic terms updated, allowing for both beauty and accuracy. 13.50 postpaid. Then there is *The Topical Chain Study Bible* in the New American Standard version, which, as the name suggests, links kindred passages for more effective study. It also has color-marked themes— grace, judgment, holiness, sin— and these run throughout the 66 books. There is a concordance and other helps, including commentary on major points at the bottom of each page throughout the Bible. It is a marvelous publication and makes for an ideal gift, and it is handsomely bound in hardcover. 29.95 postpaid.

If you are an admirer of William Barclay, you are to be reminded of his authorized biography by Clive Rawlings. It is a massive book chock-full of exciting information. 29.95 postpaid.

A much older biography that is still in print, thank God, is the *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell.* It is more that a biography in that it is the story of a unity movement. Priority reading for all who are interested in our heritage. 21.95 postpaid, but worth far more.

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OUR CHANGING WORLD

An invitation to “Believers Concerned for Christian Unity” has been issued by the University Church of Christ, 310 Donaghey, Conway, Arkansas 72032, phone 501-329-9176. The occasion is a unity conference to be held at the University church Jan. 21-23, 1985. The format of the conference is such that all who attend may participate in the discussions. The first such conference being last January, this second one will attempt to make some assessment of what has caused division, the limits to which we can tolerate differences, and the logistics of moving toward a wholehearted fellowship of believers. You may inform J. Harold Thomas, chairman of the conference, of your intention to attend.

The Central Church of Christ in Irving (Dallas) has recently made a significant change to its signboard out in front of its impressive facility. Underneath the name Central Church of Christ is *an Ecumenical Fellowship.* This is a daring but scriptural step to take, and I presume the first church among us to designate itself in such a manner. Ecumenical, meaning worldwide, is a Biblical term. Being on a major highway leading to DFW airport, the sign is exposed to tens of thousands daily. The church cooperates with other churches in the community in various ministries, and Jim Carter, the pulpit minister, is an officer in the local ministerial association, so the wording on the sign is not an empty phrase.

We are both pleased and humbled by the commendations that keep coming for *The Stone-Campbell Movement: An Anecdotal History of Three Churches* by Leroy Garrett. *The Disciple* recently quoted from it at length on its cover, along with a picture of the old Cane Ridge church. Ordinary folk who do not usually take to history report that this is history they can read and understand. There are two ways you can get the book: send 21.95 and we will pay the postage. Or get up a club of eight subs to this journal, new or renewals, including your own, (24.00 total) and we will send you a bonus free copy. But you must request it when you send the subs. Make it a Christmas gift!

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Be conscious of the conference for more open, less traditional Churches of Christ at Central Church of Christ, 1710 W. Airport, Irving, Tx. 75062. Write or call (214-259-2631) *for a program or other information.*

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Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, TX 76201*

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